Merriman Smith, 57, Found Dead in Home

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United Press International

Merriman Smith, Pulitzer price-winning White House correspondent for United Press International, was found dead in his home late yesterday, apparently of a self-inflicted gunshot. He was 57.

He had covered six Presidents over a span of more than 28 years. As dean of White House correspondents, he was the one who usually ended presidental news conferences with "Thank you, Mr. President."

A highlight of his reporting career was his coverage of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, which won him a Pulitzer Price to go with many other laurels.

Smith suffered a severe illness in December 1968 in Miami where he had gone with the President-elect Richard M. Nixon. He recovered in time to cover the beginning of the Nixon administration in 1969.

Ten days ago he entered a Washington hospital for a few days. Following his discharge he had been busy arranging entertainment for the White House Correspondents Association annual dinner, to be held this coming Saturday night. Yesterday morning he telephoned his office that he had a severe cold and would not be at work.

In the afternoon he and his wife made plans to go to one of his favorite Chinese restauants for dinner. He went to his bedroom in their suburban home in Alexandria, to dess.

When he did not answer her call a little later, she went to his room and found him in an adjoining bathroom — a bullet wound through his head and a .357 Magnum revolver nearby. Alexandria officials said a death certificate would be issued today.